

24th September 2024

Presbyterian Support Southland (PSS) Public Apology

As the representative for Presbyterian Support Southland I wish to unreservedly acknowledge the historical abuse and neglect suffered by those in our care, and to offer a genuine and heartfelt apology.

This marks an important step in our journey with survivors of abuse in our care, both those who have already come forward and those yet to make contact with us. I acknowledge the abuse they suffered, how it happened, what we are doing to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in our care today and into the future.

I want to acknowledge the courage of those who have come forward seeking redress with us. This will have been incredibly difficult given the impact the abuse and neglect you experienced will have had on your ability to have trust and confidence in our organisation. The fear and sadness you will have lived with will have been extremely painful and would have had a significant impact on your lives. We thank you for the opportunity to tautoko/support you appropriately through the redress process and hopefully assist you on your journey of healing.

Over recent years, many survivors have come forward to share their stories of abuse and neglect that came at the hands of those who should have provided a caring and safe home to them. This includes those who spent time at our dedicated children's homes; Sutherland Home, Gladstone Home, Alison Home, Tweed Street Boys Home, Inglenook Children's Home, Highfield Home, Highfield Disability Home, and at times, managed placement of children with families in the community.

It is clear that many children in our care were subjected to or witnessed abuse and neglect of siblings and of other children. It's also clear that the scars of this treatment extend far beyond the time spent in care, and has intergenerational repercussions for survivors, their whānau, hapū, iwi, communities, and support networks.

Much of the abuse occurred in isolation, leading survivors to feel like they were alone in the suffering. We condemn the horrific mental, emotional, physical and sexual abuse and neglect that occurred and we acknowledge the wide-ranging impacts on each survivor.

For those who experienced abuse and neglect, we are sorry.

Our Services



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As CE of PSS, and on behalf of our Board and management we accept the organisation's responsibility for your abuse and neglect – it should never have happened. I wish to express our deepest regret for the pain and trauma caused and I unreservedly apologise to you with the deepest sincerity.

The abuse and neglect occurred because we failed to have robust processes in place across a number of important areas. The recruitment of staff, and of foster parents and oversight of those living in the homes with staff were far from adequate. Support to children was severely lacking and if we had regularly spent time with them and the individuals charged with their care, we may have been able to better understand what was happening for them. We take full responsibility for this lack of appropriate oversight. The abuse and mistreatment of children and young people is never ok, and it is certainly not who we are today.

Our aim is to make sure the people and families we work with feel safe. We have comprehensively reviewed and updated our internal processes to ensure we have the right practice and people in place to help prevent this from ever happening again.

We recognise that for survivors this assurance may feel hollow. Unfortunately, we cannot offer you the justice of seeing those responsible held accountable for their actions.

While we cannot undo the abuse and neglect of the past, please know we are committed to providing a robust, empathetic and supportive redress process. You will be heard, and you will be believed.

With the utmost of humility and sincerity we apologise, and we hope that you will allow us to provide support to you on your journey of healing.

Yours sincerely,

Matt Russell
Chief Executive

Our Services

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Family Works